

HIGH FARM, HOUSE
Creek Road, one mile
west of Easton Road
Pipersville
Bucks County
Pennsylvania

HABS NO. PA-5591

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PHOTOGRAPHS AND
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HIGH FARM

HABS NO. PA-5591

Location: Creek Road, one mile west of Easton Road, Pipersville, Buck County, Pennsylvania.

Significance: The High Farm is an excellent example of a Bucks County stone farm house with an unusual floor plan which is almost a mirror image of itself. An unique arrangement of twin, boxed-winder stairways rise from the basement to the attic. The house includes a number of other significant, intact interior features such as paneled walls, built-in cabinets, etc. and also has a number of unaltered outbuildings.

Description: The High Farm House is a two-story, asymmetrical four-bay-by-two-bay, irregular-coursed, uncut stone farm house. It has a modern kitchen addition to one side, which joins the main house to an old stable building (re-adapted for living space) to the rear. The southeast front entry is recessed and has paneled reveals which correspond to the raised six-panel, cross-and-open-bible door. Above the door is a three-light transom window. The windows on the first floor are nine-over-six-light double-hung sash, with six-over-six-light double-hung sash windows on the second floor. There are small four-over-two-light double-hung sash windows in the gable ends. All windows have a simple architrave surround and wood sills. The first floor windows have raised-panel shutters. A porch, supported by plain posts, runs the length of the front facade. The house has a low-pitched gable roof covered with slate shingles. There is an interior chimney at both gable ends.

The interior plan of the house is very unusual. It consists basically of four rooms on each floor, but the east front and south rear rooms are mirror images of each other, including identical fireplaces, paneled walls and boxed winders--one up and one down. The front doorway enters directly into the east parlor, which is separated from the south room by a beaded-board partition wall. The fireplaces in both of these rooms are large enough for cooking and retain their cranes for such a purpose. Both have rare, folding paneled shutters in front of the fireplace opening which can be closed when not in use. The two doorways to the stairs, side-by-side but with the upstairs winder two steps up, have raised-panel doors. This same arrangement of stairways with paneled doors--with the addition of a small built-in cabinet but without the fireplace--is found in the east bedroom on the second floor and in the hall to the north of it. Thus, boxed winder stairways--to either side of the northeast end of the house--extend from the basement to the attic. There are smaller rooms to the south front and west rear of the first floor (entered through the east and north rooms), and bedrooms to the east, south and west on the second floor and a hall and bath to the north, with a hall through the center, running northeast to southwest.

From the interior, the exterior-facing walls of the house are plaster over stone, and the interior walls are all beaded-board partition walls. The windows are recessed into the wall from the interior and have splayed reveals and a simple, narrow surround consisting of a splayed piece around the opening and a narrow band with a bead on either edge around it. There is a simple chair rail--at the height of the window sills--on the exterior walls (not on partition walls) on the first floor and in the front rooms of the second floor. There is also baseboard on the plaster, and not the partition, walls. The ceilings in all rooms have exposed joists, and a large summer beam runs through the center of the house, on all floors (where the partition wall is located). The doorways on the exterior walls have a simple stepped backband, and there is no surround (only a beaded edge and plain lintel) around the doorways on the partition walls. The doors are all five panel (three horizontal panels above the lock rail and two vertical below). The doors have suffolk-latch hardware. There is random-width wood flooring throughout. In addition to the two first-floor fireplaces on the north-east side, there are fireplaces in the two bedrooms on the southwest side (closed over in the south room). There are small, shallow cabinets (for candles?) in the south room on the first floor and on the second floor in the hall and east bedroom.

The attic is unfinished, revealing the heavy, hand-hewn timber framing with mortise and tenon joints. There are three principal rafters which form trusses, all with pegged joints. The rafters are jointed at the roof with pegged joints (without a ridge pole). The chimney blocks at either end are rounded and have been finished with plaster. The (full) basement also reveals heavy, hand-hewn timber framing and a large summer beam. There are also large stone relieving arches under the fireplaces. Also visible in the basement is the structural support of the stairways, which are not boxed here. It reveals that the steps wind around a center post (in the fashion of a lighthouse!).

History:

No historical research was undertaken at the time of this survey (and no historical research has been done by the sponsors or others). There is a date which appears in the semi-circular wood panel in the southwest gable end which reads 1848, with the name of a previous owner--perhaps the builder--High. This, however, seems to be a late date for a building of it construction--hand-hewn timber framing with mortise and tenon joints and--plan and detailing. Cabinets and doors are likewise jointed with pegs rather than nails. Perhaps, then this house is a hang-over of earlier building traditions.

There is no clear explanation for the unusual, mirrored plan. The current owner, however, was told that it was built for two families--one occupying the front and the other the rear--thus the need for two cooking fireplaces and two stairways. No documentation to support this has been thus far revealed.

Outbuildings:

There are a number of interesting and intact outbuildings. The first is a one-and-a-half story, two-bay-by-one-bay kitchen building of irregularly coursed, uncut stone. It has a gable-front roof covered with corrugated metal, and six-over-six-light double-hung sash windows (with a six-light fixed window in the front gable end. The entry has a dutch door. Inside, at the northeast wall, is a large cooking fireplace with a semi-circular beehive bake oven (covered to the rear with a shed extension). There is a closet with shelves to the side of the fireplace, with a four-panel door. There is a brick floor (with a drain at one corner), the walls are covered with plaster, and the ceiling has exposed joists. A ladder stairway leads to the second floor loft (unfinished).

There is an underground, vaulted spring house and well located just southwest (in front of) the kitchen. A wooden door covers the stone stairway into the vault which is stone plastered over, with a few stone ledges jutting out from the walls. To the rear of the vault is access to the well.

There is a large bank barn to the southwest of the house. It was built in two parts (with the southwest section probably being the oldest). It rests on a stone foundation and has board-and-batten walls. There are horse stalls below (in the banked section) and hay and equipment storage above. The interior reveals heavy timber framing with mortise and tenon joints.

Sources:

On site investigation and discussion with current owner, Mrs. Lillian Deming.

Historian:

Catherine C. Lavoie, HABS, November 1991.